



Ronan in School

Mr. Enda Kenny

An Taoiseach,

Dail Eireann.

Re: Unsuccessful Medical Card Appeal for Ronan Woodhouse Medical card Ref no: 1049

September 23th 2013

Dear Mr. Kenny,

I am following in the footsteps of Tim O' Brien from Cork in appealing for my son's medical card to be reinstated. This evening I received a letter telling me that my appeal for a discretionary medical card had failed. I have been waiting since end of March for this decision. I can't begin to tell you how distressing this is.

Like Tim, I have a child with **Down syndrome**. Ronan is 8. Along with this lifetime condition he has **chronic asthma** requiring 2 inhalers, daily nebulizers, a nasal spray and singulair (asthma medication) daily, he was hospitalized on several occasions with bronchitis and croop, he has **hearing loss** (bilateral hearing loss more significant in the left ear) and **sight difficulties** Ronan wears glasses permanently, he has thyroid issues which require ongoing monitoring and bloods. Ronan has two **skin conditions** scalp psoriasis and pityriasis amantinea (for which I have to buy specialist products not covered by medical card) he wears orthotics in order to walk properly and attends regular speech and language therapy to help him communicate better. We are still working on toilet training and he has frequent accidents in school, indeed he is still incontinent at night and wears night-time pull-ups. Ronan was born with a **hole in his heart** which thankfully required no intervention. He is under the care of Dr. Siobhan Gallagher Consultant Pediatrician. Ronan attends mainstream school and is doing well despite resource cuts.

So as you can well imagine it's been a difficult journey. I am my child's advocate and I am now asking for your assistance on his behalf so that he can fulfill his potential and remain well. In fact I'm quite confused by this decision which I am now being told is based on means when my means have substantially decreased since 2005 when he was initially given his discretionary medical card, in fact we were a two income household then. The criteria appear to have changed. I am a single parent since 2006 working full-time within the public service in order to provide for my child. With all the pay cuts and levies I'm unsure as to how I can sustain it all if Ronan is without his medical card. I do not receive any maintenance in respect of Ronan. **The letter I received today stated that it would not cause us any undue hardship. I beg to differ.** Whilst Ronan was never issued a card on means basis now, we are being assessed on this basis rather than on need, why when it has been renewed time and again on medical grounds?

If I am without a medical card for Ronan my child care costs will automatically double as he attends a community child care Afterschool facility as I work. Given that Ronan has approx 15 visits to the GP per year this will now cost €60 per visit. His monthly medication bill will be in excess of €150. In addition to the medical card provision for his glasses I paid an extra €195 to get specialist glasses required. He will shortly require new orthotics which are €300 a pair Each year I pay for bi-weekly speech and language therapy sessions, occupational therapy, psychological reports etc (as the statutory services are inadequate to meet my child's needs). He has also attended a number of private consultants e.g. Dr. Liam Carroll, Dr. Bart Ramsey.

I myself am on a lot of medication due to asthma contracted post swine flu despite taking the vaccine. My medication bill is €144 per month not to mention frequent GP and Consultant visits.

Please Mr. Kenny, do not let my child's needs as one of the more vulnerable in society suffer as a result of all the cutbacks and austerity. I voted for Fine Gael in the last election and now feel cheated as I was assured on the doorstep that my child's medical card would not be taken. Please take these circumstances into consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Noreen Keane

Cc. Minister James O' Reilly

Kieran O' Donnell TD